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Eugenics: the Suicide of a Nordic Race

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IS sterilization really an apt means for race betterment? Is Nazism right in its sociological principle, from which sterilization is a conclusion, that the individual should be wholly subordinate to the State?

In support of their program the Nazis drew their first argument from science. To prove that heredity was responsible for the rapid increase of mental defectives they claimed that according to the Mendelian laws the proportion of defectives grows faster than that of the sound.

The Nazi sociologists went awry in their calculations because they erroneously applied the results of Mendel's experiments to human society. Working with plants Mendel had made his crossings exclusively within certain groups. Hence his results would be applicable in human society only if defective persons married none other save defectives, healthy persons none other than healthy, heterozygotes none other than heterozygotes.¹ The Nazis overlooked the fact

¹ Pedro Arrupe, "Tiene la esterilización valor eugenésico positivo?" *Razón y Fe*, Madrid, Julio, 1938.

that among men marriages take place without regard to such biological classifications. And when matings are made without regard to the groups (panmixia) the proportion of unhealthy offspring remains constant.

The promoters of sterilization, however, were not downcast by this shattering of their first argument. Is there not reason enough to justify our program, they rejoined, in the fact that we are trying to reduce this large and constant number of defectives who otherwise would always burden society? Especially in these times of economic depression, argued Schultz, the director of the Nazi eugenic clinic at Münich, we must retrench expenditures on the weak that we may provide for society's useful members. It is intolerable to continue such large disbursements for the useless members of the race when those able to work are undergoing so great a crisis.²

But will sterilization actually reduce the proportion of hereditary defectives? Seemingly it prevents the generation of children who in their turn would transmit their infirmity to the following generation. Just sterilize all the diseased people alive during some one period of time, and presto! after one generation all hereditary defectives will have disappeared.

But right here a curious phenomenon enters the scene. Let us suppose the impossible, that all the diseased people alive during one generation could be sterilized without a single exception. Contrary to all expectations the following generation would contain just about the same proportion of hereditary defectives. Why? Because, according to the laws of heredity, society contains an immense number of the phaenotypically sound. These, curiously enough, cannot be discovered precisely because they are perfectly healthy themselves. Nonetheless, since they are carriers of the genetic germs of a disease which they

² See Schmitz, *Kritisches zur Rassenhygiene* (Valkenburg, 1934), p. 18.

will transmit by heredity, their children will be defectives. Take the albinos for example, 25 of each 100,000 Europeans are albinos. This means that in Germany's 60,000,000 people there are 15,000 albinos, 48,117,632 normal people, and 1,867,368 undiscoverable individuals who, while perfectly normal themselves, will nevertheless transmit albinism. Even were it possible to sterilize every one of the 15,000 albinos, this group of nearly 2,000,000 would effectively perpetuate albinism.

Clearly, then, the sterilization of one generation is altogether insufficient to achieve the disappearance of any one hereditary disease. Germany recognized this fact full well, for Lenz, one of her leading eugenists, stated: "Sterilizations on a small scale are obviously insufficient for a real purification of the race." Forced, therefore, to choose between sterilization on a grand scale (*extensive Praxis*) and on a reduced scale (*restriktive Praxis*) Germany chose the grand scale and gave it expression in the first sterilization law of July 14, 1933. Here are the statistics for the first year of this law's application:

Declarations of infirmity

obliging sterilization . . .	84,525 (1 for each 771 inhabitants)
Charges accepted	64,446 (75%)
Sterilization performed . .	56,244 (28,286 men, 27,958 women)

Convinced that these numbers resulting from the *extensive Praxis* were too small, the Nazi government decided for sterilization on a scale far more extensive still.⁸ The new laws of February 25 and June 26, 1935, left room for a very elastic interpretation which allowed the state's functionaries to multiply the cases comprehended still further. The number of sterilizations swelled, but no official statistics have been published. Sober calculations range from 200,000 to

⁸ For the text of these laws and a brief commentary upon them see Pedro Arrupe, "Aplicación de la ley de Esterilización en Alemania," *Philos.*, Vol. IV, No. 9, Madrid, 1936, p. 4.

400,000 operations.⁴ Yet not even this is adequate to the ideals of the German eugenists. Here is the report of Lenz, one of the leading German eugenists:⁵

A race hygiene commission under the leadership of Laughlin has developed quite a radical program, under which almost 1/10 of all living people would be sterilized. In the first year approximately about 100,000 sterilizations should be performed, increasing up to about 400,000 in 1980 at which time about 15,000,000 inferior people would be sterilized.

The Committee of the American Neurological Association, after its exposition of a similar program proposed by certain American enthusiasts for sterilization, comments: ". . . those who are friendly to eugenics and those who value human liberty and individuality ought to take a very firm stand against such over-dogmatic and socially excessive measures."⁶

Even if sterilization could be realized in these ideal proportions what would be its results? We can find it in the calculations of Bodewig, Steele and Schmitz.⁷

Bodewig has made his computations in the case of one disease which exists in the proportion of twenty-five cases every 100,000. Merely to halve this proportion would require sterilization for twenty-six successive generations, i. e., throughout 780 years. Peculiarly enough the diminution achieved would be smaller each generation. In an extreme case of a disease met in the small proportion of ten in each 100,000,000, reducing this proportion by 50% would take 13,097 generations or 292,910 years. In the concrete case of schizophrenia which claims .12% (twelve hundredths of one per cent) of Germany's

⁴ Albert Niedermeyer, "Die Sterilisierung vor dem Forum der Wissenschaft und der Moral," *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen St. Lukas-Gilde*, Vol. IV, No. 3, Vienna, 1936, pp. 98ff.

⁵ Quoted in *Eugenical Sterilization. A Reorientation of the Problem*, by the Committee of the American Association for the Investigation of Eugenical Sterilization (New York, Macmillan, 1938).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁷ E. Bodewig, "Mathematische Betrachtung zur Rassenhygiene insbesonders zur Sterilisation," *Annals of Eugenics*, Vol. V, Parts 3 and 4, October, 1935.

population, it would be necessary to sterilize more than 500,000 persons to achieve 50% diminution of the proportion. This is the positive efficacy of sterilizing the psychopathics. Meager indeed!

Everyone recognizes that sterilization, especially if practiced on the scale desired by its protagonists, entails many other effects beyond the actual operation. Consequently to appraise its utility we must study all these effects and then get the algebraic sum of all the positive and negative values involved. The eugenic value, whether positive or negative, will be expressed by the positive or negative value of this sum.

We shall confine our considerations to some of sterilization's social effects. Doctor E. A. D. E. Carpe,⁸ professor of psychiatry at the University of Leyden, has stated: "I am firmly convinced that sterilization spreads sentiments of hate and restlessness, and this cannot fail to manifest itself in an increase of crime." A prominent judge of Leipzig found that a large proportion of the defendants tried in his court for sex crimes were sterilized persons.⁹ In numerous places sterilization propaganda has issued in unexpected results. Stumpf and Bodewig both relate the case of one young man who was sterilized in one of the smaller towns of the United States. He subsequently infected almost all ("fast sämtliche") the young women of the locality with syphilis. They had sexual relations with him all the more readily because of the security given by his sterilization. This is not the only case of the kind recorded. We wonder what the situation would be if there were not one, but millions, of sterilized. The answer is hinted at in a case related by Grossam.¹⁰ On days

⁸ E. A. D. E. Carp, "Die Sterilisierung im Sinne negativer Eugenik," *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen St. Lukas-Gilde*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (Vienna, 1936).

⁹ Pedro Arrupe, *op. cit* in *Razon y Fe*, Madrid, Julio, 1936.

¹⁰ W. Grossam, *Die Sterilisierung auf Grund per privater Autorität und auf Grund der gesetzlicher Ermächtigung*, *Quartalschrift*, Linz, Vol. 83, No. 1 (1920), p. 59.

free from work the young laborers of a certain German industrial city, all in perfect health, approached the University's faculty of Medicine to secure clandestine vasectomy in order to practice vice without any danger of disagreeable consequences. There is another important point which enthusiasts for sterilization seem to have overlooked. It is a demonstrated fact that with great frequency geniuses spring from abnormal families.¹¹

Beethoven's father and mother were alcoholics. He himself was a paranoiac with a tendency to alcoholism. The father of Napoleon Bonaparte was a hypnomaniac. Napoleon himself was neurotic and possibly epileptic. Byron's mother was a hysteric whose father was a suicide. Michelangelo's father suffered from periodic attacks of insanity with delusions of persecution. Poe was alcoholic, perhaps on a depressive and ipileptoid (dipsomaniac) basis. He suffered attacks of delirium tremens. His father was psychopathic, his mother died from phthisis of the lungs, and one of his brothers was a dipsomaniac. Rightly enough does Bumke exclaim: "I would rather accept in the bargain the diseased manic-depressives than to give up the healthy individuals of the same hereditary cycle."

INDIVIDUAL SUBORDINATED TO STATE

Probably more important than all the aspects of sterilization hitherto considered is the fact that the mere passing of such a law sanctions the sociological principle of the complete subordination of individual to the state. Thus a sexualization leaves the category of purely biological problems to become an ethical and sociological question as well. It must now be judged by something more than the principles of eugenic biology.

One way to determine whether a principle is true

¹¹ W. Lange-Eichbaum, *Genie, Irrsinn und Ruhm* (München, 1928).

or false is to judge it by the consequences which follow its admission. A nation adopting this principle would soon claim exorbitant rights and still remain logical to its first principle. It could enjoin castration and abortion, control the birthrate in such a way that men would be put into straightjackets with respect to the most intimate family relations, and carry through a hundred other measures which would reduce the dignity of the individual citizen almost to zero. Marriage would not differ much from cattle breeding. Such a state would be quick to tear children from the family if it surmised that their education or native environment did not give sufficient guarantee of producing citizens conformed to its own political ideas. Finally, still in complete logical accord with its principle, it would claim the right to forbid further life to those who have become "a burden to the nation"—for example, to the aged or incurable tuberculars. It would pass sentence of death for the crime—hitherto the misfortune—of being infirm or having consumed one's energies during long years of toil. It would oblige children to denounce their aging parents that death might be "mercifully" administered to them. In the light of all this we can understand the well known affirmation of the English physicians about euthanasia: "thus the state will need hangmen; and let it seek them somewhere else, not from among the doctors." A succinct and telling statement!

To dispel the illusion that all this might be only the vagary of an alarmist, we need but cite the Nazi laws of September 15, October 10, and November 14, 1935. In them castration and abortion were legalized for racial purposes. Marriage was forbidden between an Aryan and a person who had even a small portion of Semitic blood in his veins. Children were obliged to attend government schools and other state institutions of training for prescribed periods.

Here state officials practiced every sort of test and observation upon them to discover characteristics of mind or body which would oblige sterilization. The operations were carried out upon young boys and girls in unbelievable numbers. Euthanasia has not yet been decreed, but it is being insistently talked up in very influential circles.¹²

When all the pros and cons so far considered are reckoned up, what eugenic significance can sterilization claim? It has one positive value insofar as it impedes the appearance of some hereditary defectives. But even this one value is, for the most part, pure theory. We have seen that in actual practice it would be almost negligible. Sterilization would have to be practiced for hundreds of generations before it would produce any notable result. It is counterbalanced in actual practice by the disastrous effects in the line of hereditary diseases and sexual abuses. It impedes the appearance of many individuals who would be humanity's greatest boast in science, art, letters and government. In the light of all this can it be said that biologically speaking sterilization has a positive value that is worth the candle?

The balance swings all the more against it when the ethico-social factors are taken into account. In this field sterilization issues in the destruction of man's rights to corporal integrity, to liberty and even to life itself. These facts alone would be sufficient reason to make us ponder and hesitate even though splendid results could be hoped for in the realm of biology. But when even the biological results are unfavorable—?

The conclusion that the algebraic sum of the values accruing from sterilization is a decidedly negative quantity was confirmed at an International Convention of Physicians held in Vienna in May, 1936, and

¹² "Artsen te Weenen, 28 Mei-2 Juni 1936," *R. K. Artsenblad* (Rotterdam), Vol. V, No. 7, July, 1936.

at a convention of prominent eugenists in Nimwegen, Holland, on July 25, 1936. We may well ask, therefore, whether the Nazi sterilization law is a rope ladder leading to a land of supermen or a noose fashioned for the suicide of a great race.

Russia Liquidates the Communists

G. M. GODDEN

Reprinted from the Irish Rosary, May, 1938.

ONCE again chairs occupied by men who have filled the highest positions, in military and civil life in the Soviet State, are suddenly empty. Another great State "trial," which has been in fact a hideous travesty of justice, has been staged in Moscow; and no less than twenty-one distinguished Soviet diplomats, administrators, doctors, and men of science have been arraigned, and induced to "confess" crimes ranging from assassination by poison to espionage and treason. Of these twenty-one eighteen were summarily shot.

This new revelation of the real nature of the methods by which the Soviet Government maintains its hold over the millions of Soviet Russia has come as a bitter shock to European supporters of the so-called "Workers' State." M. Blum, writing in his own Socialist organ, *La Populaire*, is obliged to admit that this unveiling of the true face of Moscow has created a disturbance in the Popular Front; has roused active doubts as to the desirability both of the Franco-Soviet Pact and of any closer alliance of England, the United States and the Soviets within the framework of that Pact; and that, as regards the "confessions" at this trial, "French Socialists cannot give up the use of their intellects, nor can they believe the incompre-

hensible." As a specific instance of the monstrous demands made upon French credulity, M. Blum added that "French Socialists refuse to believe that the Russian Socialist Dan, who is well known to all French Socialist leaders, can be guilty of the infamies which Chernoff (whom Dan declares he never met) accuses him." (*Le Populaire*, March 8, 1938.)

Two days after this *cri du coeur* from M. Blum a no less anguished appeal to Stalin was despatched by the leaders of the English "Independent Labor Party." Mr. J. Maxton recalled how to him and to his colleagues, twenty years ago, the new regime created by Lenin in Russia had seemed to be the foundation of a new Socialist Society "free from exploitation and oppression." How any intelligent observers of the inauguration of the regime of the Communist Party in Russia, which regime has arrogated to itself the title of the "Union of Socialist and Soviet Republics," could have expected either freedom or justice to emerge from the savage and bloodthirsty terror of 1918, onwards, passes understanding. Still more amazing is it that this delusion has lasted twenty years of renewed terror and ruthless cruelty. However now, at long last, the Independent Labor Party is compelled to declare that "recent developments in the U. S. S. R. have shocked us. . . . We cannot believe that even a fraction of the sweeping accusations . . . have any foundation. If the charges were true we should be compelled to conclude that there was something inherently wrong in the Russian Revolution to attract such degenerate types to the top of the ladder of leadership. . . . This is not working class justice, it is barbarous injustice. It is an insult and an injury to all international working-class ideals and interests. It is an outrageous travesty on the most elementary human rights and a bestial crime. . . ." (Statement signed by the Parliamentary Group and General Secretary of the I. L. P., published March 10, 1938).

Whether the particular charges brought against these colleagues and successors of Lenin, the founders and administrators of the Leninist regime, are true or not, the shock to all honest Socialist believers in the Soviet State must be equally severe; since if these men were guilty the Soviet Government is admitted to have been conducted by murderers and swindlers, and if the accused were innocent the same Government is convicted of hounding its guiltless victims to torture and death. Their deaths, and those of the innumerable officers, officials, commercialists, men of science, technicians, and workers who have been shot in the last two years in Soviet Russia, will not have been in vain if the democracies of the world have at last had their eyes opened to the fundamental truths that there was, in fact, "something inherently wrong in the Russian Revolution"; and that this latest "travesty of the most elementary human rights" is but the inevitable outcome of a Party system conceived in hatred, and sustained in terror.

The historic evidence for the class-hatred and ruthless terror on which Lenin built up All Power for the Communist Party of Russia is unassailable, and is well known. What is not generally recognized is the truth, which these trials have so forcibly brought to light, that the so-called Soviet Government, with its pretentious *façade* of Ministers, "Commissars," Courts of Justice, Ambassadors, and Constitution, is nothing at all but the tyrannical rule of a single political Party. As Dr. Gurian has so convincingly demonstrated, with a wealth of documental evidence, it was as a political Party that the Bolsheviks obtained possession of the derelict Russian Government in November, 1917. *It is by a political Party, masquerading as a State, that the Russian people have been exploited under the autocratic rule first of Lenin and then of Stalin; and that political Party has always been true to the fundamental tenets which Lenin never hesitated*

to assert and to put into practice. Of those tenets terrorism has always taken a first place; and it is interesting to recall, today, that the first group of Marxists to be constituted on a large scale were the terrorists of 1883. It was Kamenev, who was executed last year, who realized that the Leninist Government, created in 1917, was simply a political terrorism.

From the first the rule of Lenin, as Dr. Gurian points out, rejected "all moral obstacles that impeded the execution of the Party program," i. e., the program of the seizure and retention of "All Power," a seizure and retention demanding "unremitting warfare." Laws were indeed promulgated, but could be altered or revoked at will, that is, the will of the ruling Party. No rights were recognized that might limit the supremacy of the Party. There was but one publicity allowed —the publicity of the Party. The whole of life was to be conformed to the needs of the Party. Behind the *façade* of the "Workers' State" a relentless Party rule has dominated Russia. It was Lenin himself who declared that "The State is simply the weapon with which the proletariat wages its class-war. A special sort of bludgeon, nothing more." (Lenin. Works. Russian edition. Vol. XXV.) That one sentence throws a floodlight on the whole history of the Soviet State during the twenty years of its rule by bludgeon, right down to the "bestial crime" of this latest trial. For twenty years the Soviet State has never ceased to be, as Lenin said, the weapon by which the class-war has been ruthlessly waged, and that class-war has always been Party war. This is a truth to which our Socialists and Left Wingers have persistently shut their own eyes, and, as far as in them lay, the eyes of "Labor" in general.

The splendid protest launched by the British Trade Union Council on behalf of the victims of the Moscow trial, of August, 1936, was eloquent proof that Labor had at last begun to perceive the true nature of the

Party warfare in Russia; and to realize that the Communist rulers in the Kremlin have no real concern for "the extension of genuine working-class democracy and freedom," but a great deal of concern for the preservation of their own autocratic power. In order to preserve that power the Kremlin rulers have created a nominally judicial system that is, in truth, nothing at all but a political party instrument, for the effective carrying out of the suppression of all freedom and of all the inherent rights of man. The Soviet Courts, after this last trial, are seen, once and for all, to be merely organs of Communist Party warfare, effective for removing any Russian citizen, however distinguished his revolutionary record, who ventures to oppose the Communist Party prerogative. The French Socialist and English Independent Labor Party leaders have perceived, at last, that the bloodstained and tyrannical group, masquerading as the "Government of the U. S. S. R.," have absolutely nothing in common with any "vanguard of humanity" marching towards freedom.

Stalin is slaughtering innocent men, by means of the judicial system of the Soviet State; and, further, these innocent men have been drugged or hypnotized into making the elaborate confessions of their crimes. The Soviet press has been calling for the death of the "murderous dogs," the "swine," the "dregs of humanity," the "Trotskyist carrion," as the men not yet judicially convicted were named in the Soviet newspapers. Is there something "inherently wrong" in the Soviet press? The organ of the English Labor Party, the *Daily Herald*, frankly confesses its complete bewilderment.

This latest Soviet treason trial, says the *Daily Herald* leader writer, "defies rational explanation." He proceeds with language that reads strangely in a Labor journal: "Was Lenin, has Stalin been either so vicious or so incompetent that each, over long years,

gave confidence and power to 'vermin' and 'reptiles' who all the time were plotting against Russia and the *regime?*" That is an admirable comment on the shooting, one by one, of the closest companions of Lenin, his chosen lieutenants, the men who were around him in the first years of the Soviet Republic, and also of the men placed by Stalin in the highest posts. It is a question for which the *Daily Herald* finds no answer other than another frank admission of "dismay at the condition of the Soviet Union after twenty years of Soviet rule." (*Daily Herald*, March 3, 1938).

The truth is that the Government of the Soviet "Republic" is nothing more nor less than a "Polit-Bureau" of the Communist Party; and that two of the hallmarks of Communism, when seen in unrestrained action, are a quite murderous ruthlessness, and a deliberate suppression of the moral sense. As Lenin himself said: "What kind of Revolution is it without shooting?"; and "our ethics are wholly subordinated to the interests of the class-war," in other words, of the Communist Party. If it is to the interest of the "Praesidium" of the Party, secreted in the Kremlin—it is said that Stalin is so carefully guarded that when a specialist was called in to prescribe for him he was confronted with seven Stalins, and left in complete ignorance of which of the seven was indeed the autocrat of all the Russias—for State officials to suddenly accuse themselves of monstrous crimes, these unfortunates are subjected to treatment which promptly induces the required confession. That is a mere matter of Communist Party discipline; and is perfectly consonant with Communist ethics.

The repeated shooting, with or without the barbarous travesty of judicial procedure in the Soviet Courts, of critics of the Communist regime is again perfectly in accord with the terrorism inculcated by Lenin, and faithfully carried out by his Communist successors. Day by day the increasing number of empty

chairs in Moscow prove that Communism in power is a Party despotism which brooks no criticism and no opposition, and a despotism which has evolved a superbly efficient technique for the individual extermination of its enemies. It is a Party technique that has nothing whatever in common with democracy or freedom.

The Church and Conscience

REV. ROBERT H. LORD, PH.D.

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WHEN a Catholic needs help in settling his moral problems, he generally seeks it from a priest, in the confessional or elsewhere; and while doubts might conceivably arise as to how correctly an individual priest might reflect the mind of the Church, we have no doubt that what the Church as a whole teaches, in her solemn pronouncements on morals or faith, is infallibly true. For in those fields Catholics accept the voice of the Church as the voice of Jesus Christ.

But the objection may be raised, What about conscience? Each one of us has within him that "still, small voice," perpetually asserting itself, approving or denouncing what we have done or are inclined to do, judging the rightness or wrongness of our acts with an insistent, sovereign authority, which may be defied but cannot be denied.

Now if we have such a moral guide within us, why do we need an external guide like the Church? If we have this natural power of judging right and wrong for ourselves, why appeal to any outside authority? If we have this inner director that tells us what to do and what not to do, and insists on being obeyed, why set up a rival director, which may command something different, and which also insists on being obeyed?

It has often been supposed by those outside the Church that Catholics are obliged to stifle their consciences out of deference to ecclesiastical authority; that the Church demands chiefly an outward conformity to her laws, but cares little about, or even discourages, an active and alert conscience; that Catholicism is a kind of spiritual opium, and requires that we turn ourselves over blindly to the dictation of the Church and abdicate our natural dignity as free, responsible human beings.

TWO APPROACHES

On the one side, then, we are told that she minimizes, stunts or stifles its rightful authority, and tries to put her own authority in its place. And from another side we get the opposite reproach: the Church makes too much of conscience. Numerous groups of present-day anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists assure us that what we call conscience is just a jumble of prejudices, impulses, and inhibitions inherited from primitive man.

This odd assortment of queer notions represents, according to one view, the superstitions of early savages, who imagined that, by doing this thing or not doing that one, they could keep on good terms with whatever higher powers there were. According to another view, it represents the kind of conduct which our remote ancestors thought socially valuable: the code of rules which experience taught them would best promote the survival and general interests of the tribe. Conscience, in any case, is an atavistic relic, an ancient bard, a spectre from the misty past, which is always trying to keep us enchain'd with the fetters that primitive man forged for himself; and the Church is very wrong in exalting conscience as she does, and thus helping to keep up this delusion.

In the face of these charges that she makes too

little of conscience and too much of conscience, it may well seem likely, at first sight, that in this, as in countless other questions, the Church's position represents the golden mean between extremes. On the one hand, she will not admit that conscience is just an echo of primitive fears and superstitions, or the "voice of the tribal self," or "the organized experience of the race," or the mouthpiece of anybody's long range calculations of social expediency. On the other hand, we cannot accept conscience as the voice of God, if thereby we mean that through conscience God speaks directly to every individual. For people often differ in their moral judgments, and we cannot suppose that God whispered to A one thing and to B the contrary.

WHAT CONSCIENCE IS

For the same reason, we do not regard conscience as in any sense an infallible guide. It is not, as some have supposed, a kind of sixth sense, by which we instantaneously know what is right and wrong just as the sense of taste tells us that sugar is sweet, and some pickles are sour. Nor is it a distinct faculty of our minds, like the intellect, the will, the memory, or the imagination.

What, then, is conscience? According to Catholic thought, it is simply one form of the activity of the intellect. We are constantly passing judgments on all sorts of matters: about the weather, our health, our business, politics, Hitler or Mussolini. Some of these judgments record simply our opinions of what is or is not true, and these we call speculative judgments. If someone should state, "Southern California is undoubtedly the original Garden of Eden with all the modern improvements," that would be a judgment of the speculative intellect. Other judgments, which relate to what we ourselves have done or meditate doing, we call practical judgments: e. g., I think I should move to Los Angeles.

Many judgments of this latter class deal with our moral problems. If I ask myself the question, Should I murder the actor in Hollywood who annoys me so excessively in the movies? my answer would be a practical moral judgment, or a moral judgment of the Practical Intellect. That is what conscience is, in the strict sense of the word: not a faculty, not a power, but an act; a moral judgment passed by the Practical Intellect.

COMPARING ACTS

How do we arrive at such judgments? It is by comparing the act whose morality we are to appraise with some general law or fundamental principle of right conduct. Murder is wrong, for instance: therefore I ought not to murder that actor. How do we learn these general moral laws?

In part we can learn them as we learn the laws of the physical world: from reason, observation, experience. Some of them are almost as self-evident as the first principles of mathematics. That we ought to do good and refrain from evil, honor parents and benefactors, care for our children, pay our debts, speak the truth, be brave, and prudent,—these and many other simple moral principles are so evidently true that all peoples in all ages have recognized them. But there are other moral questions to which we can find the answer only after some little reasoning, and some still more complex ones that require a great deal of reasoning.

So far I have been speaking only of what are called the Natural Moral Laws: the laws rooted and grounded in the make-up and capacities of human nature. These, let me repeat, reason alone might teach us! but for many of them, this would involve more effort and clear thinking than can be expected from the majority of men. Moreover, in this field above all others, where our higher nature is so constantly pitted against our

lower impulses, passion and selfishness and the theories and fads of the moment that pander to our weakness, are but too apt to interfere with clear thinking and to warp or blind our judgment. "Ought I to get a divorce?" "Is it right to practice birth control?" "May I commit suicide rather than face an incurable and painful disease?"—what uncertain or discordant answers we get to such questions today from people who have no guide but their conscience.

GOD'S CALL TO US

But the Natural Law is only part of the Divine Moral Law. God has called us to something far greater than human nature is of itself fitted for: to the supernatural life of heaven. As to what special duties and obligations this entails, reason can tell us nothing. Ought I to be baptized? Does God want me to confess my sins to a priest, or to Himself alone, when I feel like it?—these are questions that only God can settle for us.

To obviate these difficulties, God has been good enough to make us a revelation of the moral laws which He wishes us to observe. The laws of the material world He has left us to find out for ourselves, for they are not so important. But the laws of the spiritual world, on the observance of which depends our eternal happiness or misery, are something about which He has wished to give us adequate and certain information. For that purpose He spoke by Moses and the Prophets, and He sent His Only-begotten Son into the world. And lest that revelation should be lost, He founded His Church, in order that this adequate and certain knowledge of His laws should be spread to all nations, preserved to all ages, and rightly interpreted as new situations arise.

The Church, then, is the transmitter for God's moral message to us. Our conscience is our receiver. Both should co-operate harmoniously. It is utterly

erroneous to imagine that they are bound or are even likely to come into conflict.

SACREDNESS OF CONSCIENCE

The Church recognizes and has always emphasized the exalted dignity and sacredness of conscience. She will call it the Voice of God in this sense, that any conscience, save the most blunted, will faithfully report at least a part of the Divine Law, and the more fully conscience is instructed, the more completely it reports that law. One of her great thinkers, St. Bonaventure, wrote: "Conscience is like a herald or messenger of God, and what it says, it commands not as from itself but as from God, just as the herald who proclaims an edict from the king."

The Church has never been content with mere outward conformity to her laws, but desires and demands active, alert, and intelligent consciences. Who else requires such regular and systematic examination of conscience as she? Who else has explored all the stages of the road to spiritual perfection so thoroughly as she? What consciences were ever so highly developed and so delicately sensitive as those of the great Catholic Saints, who represent the acme of the religious experience of mankind? And, let me emphasize, the Church does teach that conscience is the supreme court of appeal. What I must do, I alone can decide. I must follow the best moral judgment that my reason can furnish. To go contrary to my conscience, that is to my reason, would be to stultify myself, and, as one of the greatest Popes has declared, to "go to Hell."

But for the Catholic there is no conflict here. He knows that God has spoken, and that it is no sacrifice of his dignity to hearken to the Voice of God. He knows that the Church, divinely commissioned to teach him and divinely safeguarded against teaching him error, speaks to him of faith and morals with the authority of God.